United States Department of Agriculture

PARTICIPATION OF 4-H CLUB MEMBERS IN HONORING THE MEMORY OF THOMAS JEFFERSON, THE AGRICULTURIST

F O R E W O R D

There is no higher tribute 4-H members can pay to Thomas Jefferson - patriot, philosopher, farmer - than to do all they can in producing and conserving food for the men and women now serving in the armed forces. In 1943, 4-H members produced sufficient food to feed at least a million fighters. It is my sincere hope that 4-H Club members during 1944 will learn more about Thomas Jefferson as an agriculturist. I hope they will follow his example by taking advantage of every opportunity to apply science in practice wherever it will save labor and produce even more food for our fighting men, particularly those in the far distant parts of the world. In this way we all can win the battle of food production. In this way we can preserve the freedom which Jefferson cherished.

M. L. Wilson

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Director of Extension Work

225-44

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SUGGESTIONS FOR COUNTY EXTENSION AGENTS

1. Take advantage of occasions honoring the memory of Thomas Jefferson, to emphasize some of the things for which he stood, in connection with the present production and conservation of food, as is so well brought out by Director Wilson in the foreword.

2. Prepare brief statements or interviews on Jefferson to be broadcast over local stations the week of April 13.

3. On April 1 have 4-H Club members listen to the 4-H broadcast centering around Jefferson, the Agriculturist, over Farm and Home Hour.

4. Have talks on Thomas Jefferson given at county events that may be held this spring.

5. Have a special 4-H tree-planting ceremony in honor of Jefferson at the county 4-H camp or at some other county 4-H event.

6. Prepare a good statement on Jefferson, the Agriculturist, to be placed on the front page of the April issue of the County 4-H News to be distributed to 4-H Club leaders or members throughout the county.

7. Ask editors of local papers to high-light in April 13 edition some of Jefferson's outstanding contributions to agriculture.

8. Have 4-H members give talks on Jefferson, the Agriculturist, at 4-H Club and other meetings held in each rural community.

9. Prepare suggestions for discussions or dramatics to be centered on Jefferson, the Agriculturist, to be used at 4-H regular club meetings, especially during the winter months.

10. Emphasize what 4-H members in following the example set by Thomas Jefferson are actually doing in producing and conserving food to "feed a million fighters or more in '44."

JEFFERSON, THE AGRICULTURIST

M. L. Wilson
Director of Extension Work

The philosophies and ideals of Thomas Jefferson played a major part in the founding and structure of our Republic. What Jefferson stood for embodies all that for which our youth is now fighting on the battle fronts of the world.

Jefferson was a statesman, scientist, lawyer, diplomat, architect, He was the author of the Declaration of Independence. He was a pioneer advocate of the free system of public education. He was an architect--not only of our form of government but of beautiful buildings, and homes, and landscapes. He was the third President of the United States. In each of these fields of endeavor he made a distinguished contribution to the making and shaping of our country and to the democratic way of life.

Jefferson was a Virginia farmer and a champion of rural democracy. He envisioned America as a country where every family could own the farm it operated. He was not only a practical operating farmer, he was interested in the application of science to agriculture as well. He had unbounded faith in the improvements he believed science could bring to farming.

Today all of us engaged in the great job of wartime food production pay tribute to Jefferson's farsighted agricultural statesmanship. Jefferson did not believe that science should be confined to the laboratory and to books. He urged that useful knowledge and scientific methods be applied to the land, to lessen man's burden, to increase his yields, to bring about a better civilization for all.

Jefferson became interested in soil conservation because he was worried about soil erosion at Monticello. He and his son-in-law, Thomas Mann Randolph, discussed contour plowing as a method which would check erosion. He became a pioneer advocate of contour furrowing in this country. In that he was 100 years ahead of his time, for it was not until recently that contour plowing became popularly accepted as a soil erosion prevention practice. Now, however, some 850 soil conservation districts in the United States are operating on Jeffersonian democratic principles and using practices such as once were advocated by Thomas Jefferson in the effort to safeguard our Nation's soil resources.

Further evidence of Jefferson's great interest in agriculture was his agricultural library. When he sold his books to the Library of Congress, there were more than one hundred titles on agriculture, garden-

ing, and botany. When the full contents of Jefferson's library are put together, one appreciates the wealth of agricultural information available to him. He had by far the most complete library of any farmer in the United States. Jefferson believed that farmers, in general, would gain by study. A selected reference list on agriculture, prepared by him, was published in 1820 in the American Farmer.

Jefferson was also instrumental in forming the Albemarle Society of Virginia, one of the first societies intended to improve agricultural practice. Its members were interested in the establishment and maintenance of a professorship of agriculture at the University of Virginia. Jefferson had advocated the teaching of scientific agriculture for many years. His attitude was that it was really too bad to make poor lawyers out of farm boys when so much needed to be learned about agriculture. Rather, he said, there should be a professor of agriculture "in every college and university" to teach agricultural science. The recommendations with regard to a chair of agriculture were never fully put into effect at the University of Virginia, but out of that original suggestion, I believe, came the agricultural colleges of today. Not long afterward the agricultural societies took up the idea of greater progress in agriculture through education. They fought for this principle until, some years later, the first agricultural college was established in what is now the State of Michigan. Thus we may rightfully look to Jefferson as the Father of Agricultural Science and as the first proponent of the kind of agricultural education now known as the land-grant college system and cooperative agricultural extension work.

Jefferson made many personal contributions to American agriculture. While in France, he sent home new varieties of plants which he thought would do well on our native soil. He kept a garden book. He kept a farm book. Each of these is full of notes that shed light on Jefferson's farming operations. He was one of the first Americans to express interest in keeping records of the weather. From his notes and writings we learn that he not only liked to see vegetables grow, but enjoyed eating them. While President, Jefferson kept a record of the time of seasons when the various kinds of fruits and vegetables were available on the market. To show this graphically he made a chart in bar-diagram form. When he got back to Monticello he made a similar chart to show the planting season for his garden produce.

Perhaps Jefferson's most outstanding practical contribution to farming was his plow. The function of the moldboard--or plow-ear as it was also known--was to remove and turn sod over gradually with the least amount of pull or force. Plow moldboards had undergone considerable improvement in the eighteenth century. Individual improvements were practiced by farmers who made them. In this country, settlers were

largely dependent on wooden moldboard, home-made plows. Jefferson believed that much labor could be saved if farmers had simple directions for making moldboards. He designed a "moldboard of least resistance." Of it an English writer said a generation later: "It can be made by any common workman by a process so exact that its form will not vary the thickness of a hair." His was the last important improvement in the wooden plow. Soon after his developments, came the castiron plow. Jefferson's writings--and Jefferson's notes about gardening, farming, and agricultural science--offer a valuable field for study and research. Had it not been for Jefferson and the agricultural ideals for which he stood, the agricultural development of our Nation might not have been what it is today. If we were to list Jefferson's contributions to agriculture, we should have to name the following three among the greatest:

1. The moldboard for a plow of least resistance.
2. His advocacy of soil conservation.
3. Laying the foundation for the recommendation of agriculture as a science, to be taught in institutions of higher learning.

In this year 1944, American farmers face the greatest challenge ever faced by men and women who love freedom as Jefferson loved it. As their contribution to preserve this freedom, our farmers have sent their sons and daughters to the world's battle fronts. Here at home they have undertaken the greatest food-production job in history. With only 4 percent of the world's tillable land, American farmers are aiming at goals which, if they are met, will enable our soldiers, and our civilians, and the soldiers and civilians of allied nations, to win the fight for freedom.

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"Agriculture is a science of the very first order. It counts among its handmaids the most respectable sciences such as chemistry, natural philosophy, mechanics, mathematics generally, natural history, botany."

- The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, 10:429. Andrew A. Lipscomb and Albert E. Bergh (eds.). (Letter to David Williams, November 14, 1803.)

THOMAS JEFFERSON

Thomas Jefferson is revered as a patriotic statesman and philosopher, as author of the Declaration of Independence, for his services as a citizen of Virginia, as President of the United States, as a man of abiding passion for human liberty and the sacred rights of the common people, and as one who, throughout his entire career, remained preeminently and above all a farmer, devoted to the cultivation of his farms and the improvement of agriculture.

He was one of the leading farmers of his time in the United States and was profoundly interested in the sciences related to agriculture and more than any other one person can be regarded as the father and patron of the scientific agricultural developments since his time.

He practiced rotations of crops and diversified farming; introduced and improved the breeding of domestic animals and plants; contributed to the improvement of farm implements, such as the plow; encouraged the growing and use of fruits, vegetables, and other domestic products; encouraged research as to methods of control of insect pests; practiced and advocated control of soil erosion, and stood for the conservation of agricultural resources.

The founder of the University of Virginia, he urged the establishment of a professorship of agriculture, and he helped to start a train of events which led to the creation of agricultural colleges, experiment stations, and the research, educational, and other services of the Federal Department of Agriculture.

In his first administration as President of the United States, the national domain was enlarged by the acquisition of the Louisiana Territory, a great farming area which gave us a leading position in the agriculture of the world and enables us to serve as a source of food for our fighting allies.

Throughout his whole social philosophy runs a theme which recognizes the dignity of the agricultural way of life and a deep appreciation of the satisfactions which accrue, through science, education, and faith, to the farm family and the rural community.

He recognized the importance of the perpetuation of a sound agriculture as a paramount factor in the development of the economy and the permanence of our national institutions.

By reason of his contributions to agricultural philosophy, science, education, farm management, and practice, he is recognized as one of the great leaders among the farmers of this country, who are now engaged in a vital part of the war effort.

As a figure, against the background of the soil of the land he loved, he stands as a symbol of its values, democracy and freedom, for the preservation of which the American farmers and all connected with the industry of agriculture are now contributing their maximum effort.

It is appropriate that his services to agriculture should be duly recognized and brought to public attention in this anniversary year.

Many public and private institutions in the service of agriculture, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the State Colleges of Agriculture and organizations composed of farmers and their families are anxious to participate in activities in recognition of our great debt to Jefferson as a farmer, agricultural philosopher, statesman, and educator and leader in scientific agriculture.

-- Taken from the Congressional Record (House of Representatives), November 15, 1943, when was passed Senate Joint Resolution 47 providing for the appointment of a National Agricultural Jefferson Bicentenary Committee to carry out under the general direction of the United States Commission for the Celebration of the Two Hundredth Anniversary of the Birth of Thomas Jefferson appropriate exercises and activities in recognition of the services and contributions of Thomas Jefferson to the farmers and the agriculture of the Nation.

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"Agriculture honors Jefferson as the scientific leader among our farmer Presidents, who called those who labor in the earth 'the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, in whose breasts he has made the peculiar deposits for substantial and genuine virtue--its focus in which he keeps alive that sacred fire which otherwise might escape from the earth.' Agriculture and Jefferson are inseparably conjoined. Jefferson, more than any other American, laid the foundation of scientific agriculture in the United States. As an international figure in the field, he was honored by the English Board of Agriculture, the Royal Agricultural Society of France, the Agronomic Society of Bavaria. His certificate from the Agricultural Society of Florence, Italy, hangs on the wall at Monticello. He was a member of the Agricultural Society of South Carolina. He was a correspondent of the Philadelphia Agricultural Society. A record of his contributions on agriculture may be found in the publications of our oldest scientific society, the American Philosophical Society. Farm magazines, both here and abroad, published his thoughts and suggestions. Last, but not least, he was the founding spirit of his own county's agricultural society, that of Albemarle, Va."

— Remarks of Hon. Harry Flood Byrd of Virginia in the Senate of the United States, Thursday, October 14 (legislative day of Tuesday, October 12)1943. From the Congressional Record (Appendix). Wednesday, October 27, 1943.